



STATE OF WASHINGTON

SENTENCING GUIDELINES COMMISSION

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April 11, 2008

MEMORANDUM

To: COMMISSION

From: Jean Soliz-Conklin

RE: Proposed 2008 Research Plan

ACTION REQUESTED: The Commission is asked to provide comments and suggestions.

Background

We are all aware of the issues related to accuracy and timeliness of SGC fiscal notes that created the concern of legislative and OFM staff in 2007. When I was hired on July 1, 2007, I received instructions from the Commission (affirmed by OFM advisers) to hire a research director and otherwise strengthen the SGC fiscal note response capability. The SGC research staff also responds to data requests from the Commission as it develops proposals, and publishes about ten statutorily required reports. In 2001, the SGC research staff published the last of several major reports on the status of sentencing reform in Washington.

In the past nine months I have reorganized the research staff at the SGC and hired three new research-related staff. Dave Fallen, Ph.D. (SGC's well-respected interim director) assisted in hiring and training these new staff.

The new staff are:

1. Duc Luu is now the SGC Database Manager.
Mr. Luu holds a B.S. in Computer Science and Mathematics and about five years' experience as a data analyst.
2. Keri-Anne Jetzer is now the SGC Research Investigator 3.
Ms. Jetzer has a M.A. in Criminal Justice and was a research analyst at DOC for five years and DOL for one year.

3. Razak Garoui, Ph. D., became the Senior Research Director on February 1, 2008.

Dr. Garoui has a M.S. and a Ph.D. in statistics. He was a Senior Fulbright Research Scholar and Associate Professor at New Mexico State University and has published in numerous well-respected journals. Most recently he has been conducting research for OSPI for seven years and previously worked for the Workforce Training Board and ESD. He comes to us very highly recommended.

Teresa Waller is also a member of the SGC research Team. She has been with the Sentencing Guidelines Commission since 1998, and is currently a research Analyst 3 In-Training.

In addition to hiring new well-qualified staff and training existing staff, SCG has been strengthening its capacity to respond to fiscal notes by developing research protocols, increasing staff training and focusing on the quality of the database.

2008 Research Plan

1. IMPROVED DATA CAPACITY

Dave Fallen led staff efforts to upgrade the database and approaches to data analysis during the 2008 legislative session. The SGC received a briefing on improvements to the database last month.

Data Collection: Staff will improve the accuracy and completeness of juvenile disposition data collection in 2008. SGC is now using other data sources to complete missing information missing from Adult Judgment and Sentence forms. In response to suggestions by WSIPP, the SGC is now receiving monthly data uploads from the Caseload Forecast Council with historical data and monthly snapshots of the jail population.

Programming: SGC staff recently awarded a contract to a programmer, using the Department of Information Systems Master Contracting process. The SGC database will receive programming upgrades during 2008.

Methodology: SGC staff has reviewed the assumptions used to forecast jail and prison impacts. SGC staff will revise the methodology used to track juvenile dispositions and to predict jail bed impacts in 2008.

2. IMPROVED REPORTS

Recidivism (Adult and Juvenile): In 2008, SGC will work with stakeholders to review the key factors required for appropriate and useful biennial reports on recidivism; and will examine and upgrade the methodologies for data analysis and reporting.

Racial Disproportionality and Geographic Disparity (Adult and Juvenile): In 2008, SGC will work with stakeholders to review the key factors required for appropriate and useful biennial reports on Racial Disproportionality and Geographic Disparity; and will examine and upgrade the methodologies for data analysis and reporting.